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ABSTRACT

A program for improving adolescent classroom behavior through motivational techniques was developed and implemented. The targeted population was 20 junior high school students in a large, low socioeconomic status community in the Midwest. A problem in motivation had been documented through observation, an analysis of academic achievement, and a student survey. Probable causes were considered to be peer pressure, community demographics, student attitudes, teacher attitudes, and a high student mobility rate. A review of solution strategies suggested in the literature, combined with an analysis of the setting, resulted in the following interventions: (1) incentive charts; (2) instruction in goal setting strategies; and (3) feedback on completion of assignments. Post-intervention data revealed an increase in student seatwork, an improvement in the target observed behaviors, and an increase in student verbal participation during class discussion. Three appendixes include the parent consent letter, a student survey, and a behavioral checklist. A discipline referral form is attached. (Contains 2 tables and 31 references.) (Author/SLD)

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IMPROVING CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR THROUGH A MOTIVATIONAL INTERVENTION

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight
Field-Based Master's Program

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Abstract

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Title: Improving Classroom Behavior through a Motivational Intervention

ABSTRACT: This report discusses a program for improving adolescent behavior in the classroom using motivational techniques. The targeted population consists of junior high students in a section of a large, low socio-economic, urban community, located in the Midwest. The problem of motivation has been documented through observation, an analysis of academic achievement, and a student survey.

Probable causes of the problem include peer pressure, community demographics, students attitudes, teacher attitudes, and high student mobility rate.

A review of solution strategies suggested by the literature, combined with an analysis of the setting, has resulted in the following interventions being selected: incentive charts, instruction in goal setting strategies, and feedback on completion of assignments.

Post intervention data reveals an increase in students seatwork, an improvement in the target observed behaviors, and an increase in the student's verbal participation during class discussion.

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Chapter 1

Problem Statement

The seventh grade students at the elementary school studied show a lack of motivation toward learning as evidenced by teacher observation, and academic achievement on teacher made tests.

Description of Problem Setting

The elementary school services students in grades kindergarten through eighth. The enrollment of the student body is 1,080, with 99.8 percent Black, and 0.2 percent Hispanic. Student mobility rate is 65.7 percent. Student absentee rate is three and a half percent. The teaching staff consists of 10 males and 70 females, a total of 80 teachers. Fifty teachers have master's degrees.

The school was built in 1892. It is a three-story brick building with 12 to 15 classrooms per floor. There are five labs, a library, gymnasium and auditorium. It also has a modular building that consists of nine classrooms and a gymnasium. The building is in good condition. The seventh grade cycle is currently using Scott Foresman (1989) for Reading, McDougal Littel (1994) for Literature and Spelling and Silver Burdett (1987) for Science. Junior Great Books

are used as a reading tool and hands on science is used to enhance students experiments.

Description of Surrounding Community

The Community has a population of 61,517 and the majority of the population is African American. Children are bused from other communities to the school and some students take public transportation. The school is located in District Nine, on the Southeast side of Chicago. There are 49 schools in district nine.

The educational attainment of the community is: less than ninth grade 7.1 percent; ninth thru 12th grade, no diploma 20.4 percent; high school graduate 24.3 percent; some college, no degree 27.9 percent; associate and bachelor degrees 14.6 percent.

The community is made up of low to moderate income families. The average income is $15,000. The community is changing because of rapid growth of the single one-parent household. The majority of the households are headed by females. The community is being plagued by gangs, graffiti, theft, shootings and fear. The local banks are presently involved in rehabilitation and redevelopment of the area with more strip malls, small businesses, and economic development. This is gradually elevating the property values of the community. The Culture Center, Rainbow

Beach, and the New Arthur Ashe Park are major attractions and social outlets for the community.

Regional and National Context of Problem

Nationally, educators and other human development professionals have recognized that the early adolescent period (from about 11 to 14) represents a particularly challenging time. This period is often a difficult "in-between" stage during which the physical and emotional stresses caused by the transition from child to adolescent frequently result in unpredictable and sometime troublesome behaviors. Many educators argue that to be successful with these students in the classroom, teachers must be especially flexible and forgiving. In short, teachers of early adolescents need to understand how to "behave" in the classroom; they need to understand why some teaching behaviors usually succeed while others tend to fail. The first task facing middle school-level teachers who want to improve their teaching experiences, as well as the learning experiences of their students, is to become multi-disciplinary students of adolescent development (Tierno, 1991).

Motivation is one of the most important factors in successful accomplishment. Motivation is a process that can arouse and instigate behavior, give direction and purpose to behavior, continue to allow behavior to

persist and lead to choosing or preferring a particular behavior (Wlodkowski, 1990).

Many, if not most students experience the onset of puberty during the first or second year of middle school. During the period immediately preceding the major physical signs of puberty - menarche in girls, nocturnal emissions in boys - behavior will change significantly (Hurlock, 1973). When puberty is reached, all body systems and sub-systems are affected. Chemical and hormonal changes actually have an impact upon every organ (Mitchell, 1974).

The idea that students need positive verbal feedback is a basic truth for most teachers. Many teachers have given comments like "nice singing" or "you've never played better" and noticed the effect positive comments have had on the attitudes, behaviors, and actions of students. We typically classify these positive comments as "praise" and it may be surprising to read that praise is not always positive. The purpose of praising students seems to fall into three broad categories: 1. to recognize or show interest in them, 2. to encourage them, 3. to describe what we observe in their performance. When we tell students that they have done well in class, we may be intending to show interest in them as people, to evaluate their work, and to support and reinforce certain behaviors

exhibited in class or point them toward other behaviors by giving descriptive feedback. The problems begin when we realize that the statement "you did well" does not accomplish all of these purposes equally well (Bartholomew and Douglas, 1993).

Teachers dealing with homogenous grouping must make extra effort to motivate the average students and desperately need help through policies and programs to create professional support. According to contexts that matter for teaching and learning: Strategic Opportunities for Nation's Educational Goals (Cited in Gallicchio, 1993), a five-year study of what it is like to be a high school teacher today, the core problem of secondary schooling is that yesterday's teachers are teaching today's students (Gallicchio, 1992). The tremendous mismatch between the context for which teachers were prepared and have taught in for much of their careers, and the realities of today's classroom has been underestimated.

Equal to the cultural and language differences of today's students are other manifestations of changes with which teachers must cope. These include dysfunctional lives of students that take precedence over schooling, their lack of interest in reading, an imbalance between part-time work and school work, and lack of support from families. A second area for

policy development is support for students. Present policies need to be overhauled to emphasize integrated services at the school site. Stronger links are needed between students' lives and their schools, with special attention to culturally sensitive strategies that help parents help their children. Adequate and culturally sensitive counseling services; student advocates in especially distressed communities; and engagement of grassroots agencies in education through new alliances for youth are also needed (Gallicchio, 1992).

This researcher feels that many disruptive behaviors in school are caused by a lack of motivation. Lack of student motivation is a complicated problem, especially when you are talking about adolescents and the physical changes of puberty.

Chapter 2

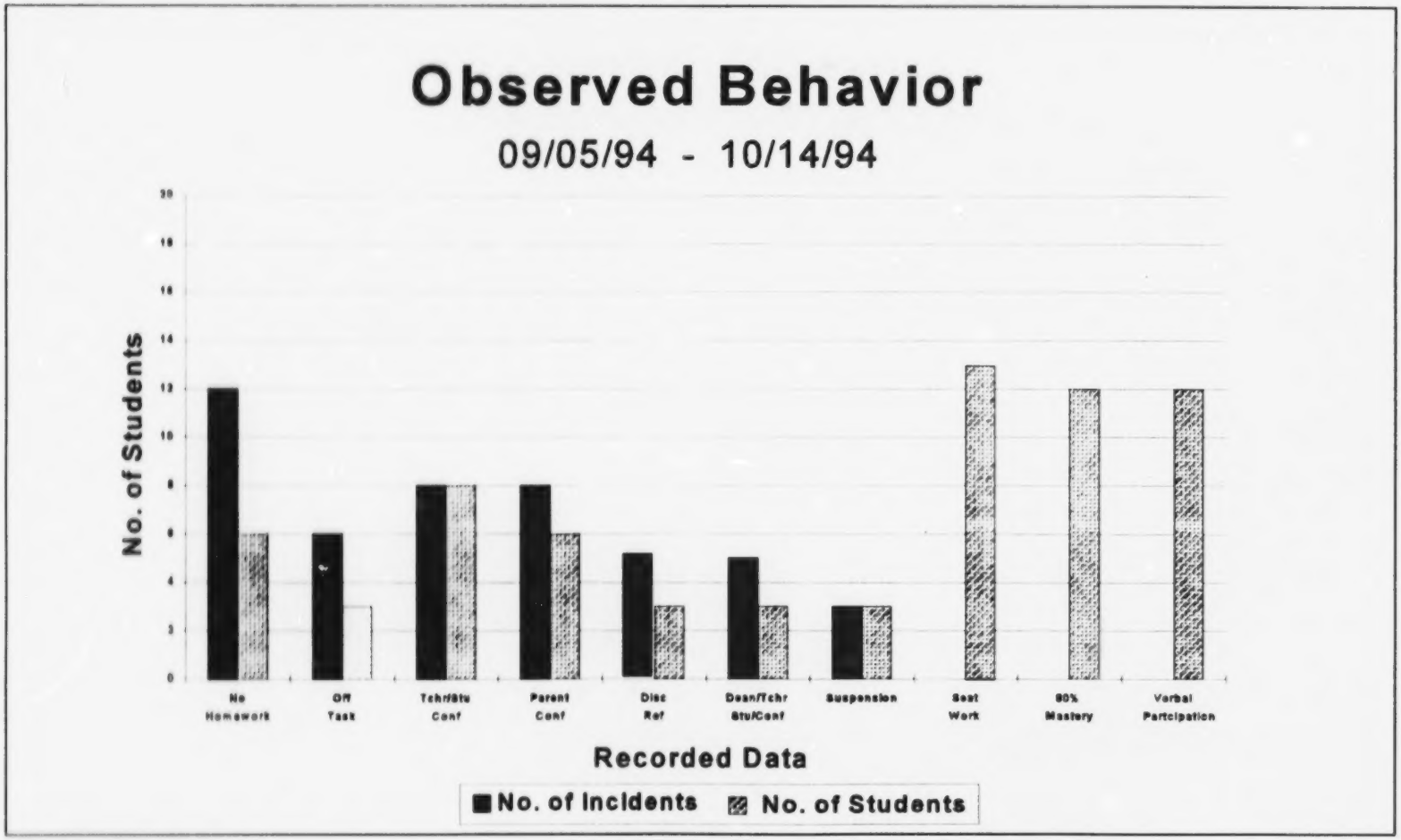
PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

Problem Evidence

In order to document the extent of student lack of motivation, the number of parental contacts, the number of teacher/student conferences, a record of discipline referrals to the disciplinary office, and student surveys were administered over a four week period.

Of the 28 students in the class, 20 were involved in this process. Only 20 permission slips were returned signed by parents. A survey form was developed by the researchers (Appendix B) to measure student's motivation to come to school. A summary of the number of teacher observed incidents is presented in table one.

Table 1


Observed Behavior
09/05/94 - 10/14/94
No. of Students
No Homework
Off Task
Tchr/Stu Conf
Parent Conf
Disc Ref
Dean/Tchr Stu/Conf
Suspension
Seat Work
80% Mastery
Verbal Participation
Recorded Data
No. of Incidents
No. of Students

The graph above contains ten behaviors observed during a six week period by the researcher. The graph also includes the number of incidents and the number of students involved. The behaviors are shown in the order in which the incidents occurred during the six week period. The number of students involved in each of the behaviors as well as number of incidents for each behavior is shown on the graph. The "No Homework" category was recorded in the researcher's attendance book using checks for students who failed to turn in their homework. Checks were also used to identify students who were off task. Behaviors three through seven were documented on official school discipline forms. Numbers eight through ten were documented in the researcher's grade book. As the table shows, a high number of negative behaviors were observed during the six week period.

Probable Causes

This researcher will attempt to identify probable causes for the lack of motivation for poor performance in school. The community is a low socio-economic area with many single parent families. There are gangs on every corner, drive by shootings, students being caught in gang's cross-fire and the selling of drugs to minors.

Probable causes of the problem may include peer pressure. Students are pressured to be part of gangs in their community. They are influenced by older peers that being in a gang will make them popular, and the gangs are their family for life.

Some students have a don't care attitude about coming to school and learning. Still others feel unwanted in class due to a lack of concern by some of their teachers. Some students come to school only because their parents insist on their coming, others come because the school is safe from gangs and they don't have to be afraid.

The students high mobility rate which is due to the gangs and drugs in the community is also a contributing factor. There are several shelters in the area, whereby students can transfer out or just leave without any explanation.

It is important to realize that motivation is not generic; most of it is learned. What is learned can be taught and teaching is our business. Therefore, we need to become knowledgeable about, and skilled in the use of, professional techniques which have high potential for increasing a student's motivation or intent to learn. Many factors affecting motivation are beyond our control. Students' families, neighborhoods, former teachers, or previous experiences in the same context have all had an effect on the motivation of students in our classes. Those factors are beyond our control (Hunter, 1982).

According to Wlodkowski (1990) teachers do not motivate students. In fact, no one motivates anyone. Teachers can make things attractive and stimulating. They can provide opportunities and incentives. They can allow for the development of competence and match student interest with learning activities, but the teacher cannot directly motivate students. Just as we are responsible for our own feelings, we are responsible for our own motivation. Between what we do as teachers and what students do as learners are the students' perceptions, values, personalities, and judgements. These elements decide the final outcomes of student motivation and behavior. There is no direct line of control between teacher behavior and student

motivation. Students can be influenced and affected by teachers, but they cannot be directly motivated. If it were not so, students would have no responsibility for their learning. They could not take pride in the choice and perseverance that leads to their accomplishments. It is not through obedience but through responsibility that real self-affirmation takes place. In many ways, because we as teachers continue to support the idea that we can motivate students, we allow them and their parents to unquestionably blame us for poor learning. As Wlodkowski (1991) states: "This continues the image of the teacher as the ultimate 'learning giver' and prevents the mutual respect and interdependence that are necessary between an effective teacher and a responsible student" (p.14).

The lack of student responsibility to achieve can be linked to many public polices at federal, state, and local levels. These policies have reduced college admission criteria, changed high school curricula, which allows students to evade complex academic tasks. While others take advantage of the need to make effort, they teach to the test, give answers to questions, construct a true and false quiz, etc. Many give the appearance of educational attainment (for example, seatwork, worksheets, diplomas, and special schools for indifferent students). Students at all levels of

ability have taken advantage of these educational gratuities (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). However, Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi state that peer pressure has great influence on the academic behavior of students. In many schools, this pressure describes the foothold students will take toward academic achievement and academic effort. Societal pressure on the student is to stay in school and graduate; but some student peers and cultures reject academic aspirations, and forceful punishment may be imposed on high achievers.

Motivation is a complicated concept that is not well understood. But, what motivates one person may not motivate another. It is difficult to understand what motivates each student. Students who do not respond, or who respond negatively are then assumed to be "unmotivated" (Berliner & Casanova, 1993).

When students are offered pity for academic failure, praise for low accomplishments, and help that is unwanted, they take it to mean that they lack ability. These messages are difficult for disadvantaged minority students, whose teachers feel sorry for them and concern about protecting their self-esteem (Graham & Weiner, 1990). They state: "Consequently, they may offer a diet of praise and help that students know is not deserved or wanted and

however well-intentioned, implies inability and stifles the hard work and enterprise so necessary to learning" (Graham and Weiner, 1990, p. 73).

It is a known fact that keeping a student from continuing on to the next grade decreases their motivation and alienates them from school. They lag behind their peers. Even after catching up with them, they still feel a sense of not belonging (Berliner & Casanova, 1993).

Many teachers wonder if their students have motivation problems. Colleagues of theirs complain about the way they have to present a lesson. It must be entertaining and high energy for them to compete with the attractiveness of out-of-school activities. Some teachers are concerned about the possible detrimental effects of granting students special privileges, tangible items, and other stimulus to persuade them to learn (Hootstein, 1994).

Rothman (1990) suggests that too many students think that school is boring. A survey was done of 25,000 eight grade students, half claimed they were bored in school for half or most of the time. This is an enormous concern for teachers. They want to keep the students focused and active, and most important, teachers want students who really want to learn. "Clearly, too many students think that school is

boring, and they see little connection between school learning and their lives outside the classroom. Consequently, many experts in the field have identified lack of student motivation as one of the primary causes of low achievement levels" (Tomlinson, 1991, p. 213).

Glasser (1986) feels that all of our motivation comes from within ourselves. There is no outside stimulus responsible for our behavior. Student behavior arises from within themselves. We all choose to do what is satisfying to us at any given time. Regardless of what is going on outside of the students, it is the inside that causes the behavior. Teachers can put their best effort forth to help student learn. But, if the students choose not to do the work, it is because it does not satisfy their need to do so (Glasser, 1986).

There are clearly differences of opinions on this matter. This researcher believes that both theories have merit and what works for one student might not work for another.

Chapter 3

Review of the Literature

Wlodkowski (1990) suggested that teachers plan motivation strategies, just as they plan lessons and organize objectives. If teachers want to motivate their students, they must think of techniques that will be useful and effective. Teachers can still have a spontaneous lesson, but it must be structured to bring out the highest potential of facilitating motivation. This is not something that can be done without very careful consideration. Even teachers who teach successfully without ever planning for motivation are doing something that relates to motivation (Wlodkowski, 1990).

Most teachers believe student motivation is a significant contributor to school performance. Motivation is confidence in one's own ability, and persistence in the face of obstacles. There are many aspects of motivation in the academic arena, and all are theoretically important (Ames & Ames, 1990).

Some believe that threat can facilitate motivation to learn. Most teachers use threats as a last resort. When persuasion and teaching methods are ineffective, we become desperate and draw back on the methods that were used on us in our school days. Teachers often

tell students if they don't "shape up," they will call their parents, lower their grades, make them do more work, keep them after school, and on it goes. And for some students, it seems to work - so teachers are reinforced in their efforts and encouraged to use them again. What happens to the student who is threatened? How does she/he feel? The same way you would feel in similar circumstances. Students feel frightened and resentful of the threatening persons. She/he will get rid of the fear by doing the work, but the resentment usually lingers. The student who is not frightened, is usually resentful because threats are often demeaning to the human personality. This may result in sloppy work, slower learning, and negativism which leads to more teacher nagging and frustration. There is no conclusive evidence that supports the idea that motivation enhances learning. Many things must be considered when trying to motivate: "Student motivation depends on the type of learning (learning to read vs. learning to write), the type of task (verbal, nonverbal, simple, or complex), the cognitive style of the learner (audio, visual, tactile), and type of setting (group or individual), as well as other factors" (Wlodkowski, 1990, p. 16).

Effective teachers do not need to threaten or coerce their students. There are innumerable things

that can be done in order to facilitate motivation. There is no pleasure in teaching where there is threat. The love of learning is a reality in the relationship of an effective teacher and a responsible student.

According the Hunter (1982) there are six factors a teacher can use to facilitate motivation. The first factor is the level of concern a student has about achieving the learning. How much does she/he care about whether they learn? If a student has a low level of concern they will put forth no effort, but a moderate level of concern is substantial for student's putting forth effort. When one is satisfied with his appearance and surrounding, one will not put forth effort to change it. It is only when one becomes concerned that one will "do something." When there is too much concern, there may be no energy obtainable for learning. The way a student feels in a certain situation affects the amount of effort she/he is willing to put forth to achieve learning. Students are most influenced to put forth effort to learn if they find the learning environment pleasant and if they anticipate a pleasant feeling that they will be successful. Common sense tells us to make classroom environments a pleasant one where students have high probability of achieving success (Hunter, 1982).

However, unpleasant feeling tones can activate a learner to put forth effort (Hunter, 1982). Most teachers are reluctant to use unpleasant tones in their classroom. Unpleasant feeling tones are effective in stimulating effort to learn, but they can have distasteful side-effects. The student may learn, but may avoid that subject or teacher in the future. Teachers need to be aware of and occasionally utilize the strength of unpleasant feeling tones (when pleasant ones aren't working). Teachers should strive to expel the possible after-effects of students evasion by returning to pleasant feeling tones as soon as students put forth effort to learn (Hunter, 1982).

Nothing increases student motivation more than the feeling of success, one must expend effort and have a certain degree of uncertainty about the outcome (Hunter, 1983). No one feels successful when they put forth little effort for accomplishment. If the work is easy and requires little effort they feel little success and are not motivated to continue. If, with effort and no guarantee they can attain the learning, they accomplish it, they feel successful and usually are motivated to try to do more (Hunter, 1983).

Hootstein (1994) suggested that teachers need to learn strategies to enhance student motivation, and they need to put these strategies into the

instructional lesson. For teachers to motivate students they need to know what is effective, why it is effective and how to implement these strategies into their lesson. Teachers need to take a closer look at their motivational strategies to see what factors make it difficult for teachers to motivate students to learn. One major factor that teachers and administrators rarely consider is letting students create more of the curriculum. This may be an important thing to try because many educators believe that young adolescents need a more personal, student-managed environment (Hootstein, 1994). Some of the strategies that were suggested would provide students with opportunities for social interaction, hands-on experience with finished products, and physical movement; provide opportunities that allow students to perceive a sense of control in their learning activities; and make learning relevant by relating the content to the students' needs, goals, interests, values, and experiences.

According to Tierno (1991), teachers of early adolescents need to understand how to "behave" in the classroom; they need to understand why some teaching strategies succeed while others tend to fail. One of the first obstacles facing middle-school level teachers that want to improve their teaching, as well as the

learning experiences of their students, is to become multi-disciplinary students of adolescent development. All teachers need to become an authority in the subject matter they teach. Becoming an expert in the subject-matter does not guarantee success in the teaching of 11-to-14-year-olds.

Many students experience the onset of puberty during these years. For most adolescents, the physiological changes created by shifts in chemistry are instrumental in producing changes in behavior, changes which exasperate both parents and teachers. Students who were pleasant and amiable become more irritable, quarrelsome, and sometimes obnoxious during this period (Hurlock, 1973).

Teachers have to understand this process. Both before and after the development of secondary sexual characteristics, difficult behaviors caused from the stress of physiological maturation can provoke an over-reaction by teachers. The most effective reaction is to remain calm and avoid the appearance of being threatened. Among the most important concepts that teachers should understand is the relationship between this new cognitive competence and the significant growth of peer influence (Havighurst, 1983; Hurlock, 1973; Sale, 1979).

Teachers can be powerful role models, despite the increased influence exerted by peers. By avoiding direct confrontations, teachers demonstrate respect for students and model appropriate ways for students to relate to each other. When faced with off-task, distractive or disruptive behaviors, teachers can react confidently with carefully planned, non-humiliating options (Havighurst, 1983; Hurlock, 1973; Sale, 1979).

Flexibility and compassion certainly are important traits of a successful middle school teacher. These traits do not automatically translate into informed and effective action. Teachers of adolescents need to recognize the socially focused motivations and behaviors of students in order to respond constructively (Sales, 1979).

The purpose of the Gottfried, Fleming, and Gottfried study (1988) revealed that parental motivation practices regarding academics play an important role in the development of students motivation. The earlier parents get involved in their children's academics, the learning process becomes significantly important to the student. The parent can socialize their children's academic motivation through encouragement of curiosity, persistence, and mastery of school-related activities. Instructing parents on motivational practices can be important for the

academic achievement of their child. An orientation to new pleasurable learning experiences, provision of assistance, and suggestion of home activities in areas which are needed will help the parents.

Many students have poor self-concepts, feel alienated and have trouble planning for the future. When students have had many years of education during which they have felt inadequate about their ability and themselves, teachers cannot expect them to be enthusiastic about learning. Teachers must work with students and the history that they bring with them to the classroom. Recognizing the complexity of motivation and the uniqueness of each situation is important (Redick & Lloyd, 1993).

Regardless of how old the student is or what their background may be, a caring teacher can unlock minds that have been closed to learning. No matter what has happened before they enter your classroom, let them find someone who cares about them and will try to make this day a good day.

Redick and Lloyd (1993) suggested using motivational strategies in game playing. Do business, but also have fun. Play a game that is designed to help students know each other, use cooperative learning to introduce fun into the lesson. Wear costumes to reinforce a lesson and show that you have a sense of

humor, be a role model, let students know that teachers attend in-service meetings and conferences. More importantly, make students aware that we all are lifelong learners (Redick & Lloyd, 1993).

According to Berliner and Casanova (1993), motivation is not a one-way street. Whether or not students are motivated to accomplish a task depends on: 1) Do they think the task is worth accomplishing, 2) do they feel capable of succeeding, and 3) is there some gain associated with its accomplishment (Berliner & Casanova, 1993). Teachers can modify each of these aspects through their actions by enhancing student motivation. Teachers need to assign students work that they can value. Teachers should give assignments that help students understand that there is something to be gained by completing the task. Teachers also need to associate what students do today with what they did yesterday and what they are going to do tomorrow, so that students can see themselves successful. Through teachers own instruction and motivation they affect the motivation of their students.

Weaver (1991) talks about "self motivation" and revealed that self-motivation is most likely to happen when one can successfully deal with stress. Stress depletes both energy and motivation. Self-motivation does not come form outside of us. It can only come

from the inside. Change must begin from within. The key to improvement and change is in recognizing one's own stress signals. Another way students can relieve stress, that is especially important, is to engage in exercise and practice good nutrition (Weaver, 1991).

Teachers should develop strategies or use specific techniques to help students deal with stressful situations. Students have trouble at home, and peer pressure, as well a sense of wanting to be accepted by their peers. Teachers and administrators should form a support group for students who have such stress.

Teachers can encourage students to eat a balanced meal and make students aware that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. If they stay away from junk food, eat regular meals of high quality, and make fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, and grains a part of their daily diet, they will less likely to experience severe stress, and will be more motivated. Good nutrition can play a significant role in motivation (Weaver, 1991).

The one problem teachers face today is teaching today's students. The context for which teachers were prepared and taught in for much of their careers and the differences in the realities of today's classroom has been under estimated. Teachers must cope with dysfunctional family lives of students which takes precedence over schooling. But teachers can overcome

these obstacles by making extra efforts to motivate students. Teachers should maximize every opportunity to better understand their students, create a positive classroom, and design lessons of appropriate difficulty (Gallicchio, 1992).

According to Johnson and Lamb (1994) educators should give students the encouragement and opportunity they need to prove themselves. In return, teachers would get motivated, hard working students. The key to educating students is, "you've got to touch the heart before you can reach the mind" (p. 38).

Jillison (1992) suggested many ideas for motivating many kinds of students. These are some that were suggested that will keep students motivated and interested in learning: "Genuinely care about your students, believe in your students, and let them know you believe in them, help students believe in themselves, post sayings and posters that create a positive climate, let students know you value their opinions and ideas and be enthusiastic about teaching, remember that enthusiasm is contagious. All of these ideas will help your love for teaching grow stronger and encourage you to go the extra mile.

According to Connolly (1993) believe in your ability that you can make a difference in your students lives. When students see that teachers care if they

learn, they will be motivated to put forth more effort to achieve the task. Teachers rewards come when they can see the positive influence they have had on a student's behavior.

Bartholomew & Douglas (1993) found that students need positive verbal feedback. Praising students encourages them to exhibit certain behaviors in class. Teachers show interest in students by recognizing them or noticing something about them in a way that acknowledges their uniqueness. When teachers tell students that they have done well in class, they are encouraged to put forth more effort to achieve the task. Teachers want students to know that although they are having difficulties, they are making some progress. Teachers want to direct the students' attention to the positive aspects of their performance, so that they can see some achievement even when other factors may be negative. Praising and encouraging students is a way for the students to become more aware of your expectations and their own achievement.

Tomlinson and Cross (1991) assert the basic ideas that higher achievement will result if the standards and expectations for student achievement are raised. All teachers should have high expectations for their students. How teachers deal with students expectations for themselves can set the standard of learning they

will meet. Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988) found that when students get into the "flow" of something-when they find something they really like and are good at, they can rise to heights of great accomplishment.

Motivation in the classroom has generally focused in the creation of intrinsic (internal)/extrinsic (external) orientations and the differential effect they produce. The focus is now directed to the role of the classroom teacher and his or her impact on the development of such orientations within the students (Brophy, 1988). Some teachers use intrinsic motivational techniques, while others use extrinsic motivation. Ames and Ames (1984) suggested that student competitive, individualistic, or cooperative task motivations are strongly influenced by the goals and values set forth within the classroom environment by the teacher. Most teachers believe student motivation is a significant contributor to school performance. Motivation is self-confidence in one's own ability, and persistence in the face of obstacles. There are many aspects of motivation in the academic arena, and all are theoretically important (Ames & Ames 1984).

When teachers relate their lesson to students interests, the students become more attentive and

motivated to stay on task. Classroom motivational strategies encourage on-task behavior from students (Ames & Ames, 1984).

Corno (1992) found that students who do well in school are not necessarily better learners than those who do poorly. Any teacher can describe some students who do well by circumventing learning difficulties. Coercing assistance from peers are not the only way this occurs, some students just buckle down when they need to and are rewarded accordingly. They take responsibility for their own learning and performance.

Hansen (1989) found that for many students, frustrating assignments evoked the kind of unmotivated withdrawal of productive work one might expect. But other students were able to rely on coping skills to focus and concentrate and become more engaged in work than usual. Students who tend to cope, seek clarification or specification of confusing elements in an assignment, often by asking direct questions. Some cope by watching what others are doing, seeking insights indirectly. Regardless of how confusing the assignment may have seemed, these students attempted to make sense of it so they could accomplish the assignment.

According to Zorn (1991), motivation to communicate in the classroom may be facilitated by the

use of instruments designed to measure the construct. Teachers may want to use these instruments to understand how students differ in their motivation. The use of these instruments can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of motivation to communication.

There are many different theories on what motivation is and how to achieve it in the classroom. This researcher believes that different techniques of motivation should be used in the classroom to reach different students.

Action Plan:

During the months of September and October the researcher collected the data. The student's homework and seatwork were collected three days a week. Charts will show the completion of homework, seatwork and 80% mastery on teacher made tests in the major subjects.

Beginning in November the researcher began the motivational intervention. The teacher instructed students on how to set and achieve realistic goals for themselves one class period each week throughout the school year. To motivate students to prepare for their futures, the teacher used career guidances including pamphlets on how to choose a career, guest speakers from different companies and universities to talk about education, behavior, and discipline in the job market. The students got positive verbal praising for completion of work, participating in class and exhibiting satisfactory behavior. Incentives for students to complete classwork and homework were to select students of the week and display their photo (for a week) in the classroom window, to use students as room and hall monitors who have completed their work, and to send positive notes home to parents concerning students behavior and achievements.

Project Objectives:

As a result of increased use of motivation techniques, during the period October 1994 thru March 1995, the seventh grade targeted students will increase their homework, seatwork, 80% mastery on teacher made tests, and participation verbally in class activities. There will be a decrease in unsatisfactory behavior, for example off task, teacher/student conferences, parent conferences, discipline referrals, dean/teacher/student conferences and suspensions, as recorded on the behavioral checklist.

Process:

1. Student homework and seatwork will be collected for completion and corrections.
2. Teacher will give students rewards/incentives for completion of homework and seatwork.
3. Teacher will instruct students on how to set and achieve goals.
4. Teacher will construct progress chart to motivate students to increase achievement.
5. Teacher will praise students for work that is well done.
6. Teacher will attempt to get parents involved in their children's education (and to feel good about their child as a student) by sending home positive notes when there is good behavior or achievement to report.

Method of Assessment

The subjects is this research began, in a regular seventh grade classroom (September, 1994) using the curriculum approved by the local school council (School Improvement Plan). The students participating in this study are the students that were assigned to room 209 in June, 1994.

The researcher will collect data on homework, seatwork, 80% mastery on teacher made test, and verbal classroom participation using the behavioral checklist that was used in the pretest (Appendix B). Thus improvement following the intervention can be charted. She chose school performance behaviors she felt indicated lack of motivation including: no homework, off task behavior, teacher/student/conferences, parent conferences, discipline referrals, dean/teacher/ student/conferences, and suspensions.

Chapter 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase the verbal participation in classroom activities, homework, seatwork, and 80 percent mastery on teacher made tests using motivational interventions. This researcher attempted to decrease unsatisfactory behavior such as off-task behavior, teacher/student/conferences, parent/ conferences, discipline referrals, dean/teacher/student conferences, and suspensions.

The intervention included motivational guest speakers. A nurse from Providence Hospital, a phone technician from Ameritech, and a local lawyer came to speak to the students about their careers. They brought pamphlets, answered questions, and demonstrated different aspects of their jobs. They also talked about the importance of self-discipline and education.

The students were given positive praises for completion of class work and homework such as "great job," "way to go," "super," "fantastic," "excellent," and stickers were placed on their assignments. Parents of those students who demonstrated satisfactory behavior were notified by notes informing them of the discipline their child displayed during the academic

instructional day. Parents were also sent positive notes about their child's academic achievements in major subjects on teacher made tests. Incentives were given to students for their achievements on classwork and homework. Those incentives included being appointed classroom monitors which entitled the students to collect homework, classwork, pass out spelling papers, and sometimes grade spelling quizzes which students enjoy doing. Hall monitors were a part of the incentives which allow the students to take and pick-up the mail from the office. It also permitted the students to escort the class to the washroom, to be lunchroom monitors and used for messenger. A student photo was displayed in the classroom window (for a week) to honor the "student of the week" as an incentive for completion of homework and classwork. Some weeks there were more than one photo displayed in the classroom window because of the excellent work the students had done.

A progress chart was constructed to help motivate students to achieve 80 percent mastery on teacher made tests in major subjects. These charts were placed in the classroom listing the name of the students who achieved 80 percent on their test. This helped to motivate other students to study harder to achieve mastery. In the beginning only eight students names

were placed on these charts who achieved 80 percent on their test. By December, there were 13 names placed on the charts. At the end of this study, 17 students had achieved 80 percent on teacher made tests.

In an effort to increase the student's verbal participation during class activities, I placed the students in groups of four. Each group was given a different color dot for their table (for example) red, blue, yellow, and purple. Each day I made a conscious effort to get participation from every student in each group. It was difficult at first to get students to raise their hands and answer or ask a question. But, I would discuss the questions and possible answers to the questions to make the students feel confident enough to raise their hands and not feel what they were about to say was wrong. I generally begin with "there are no right or wrong answers," so they would feel free to make any statement that was relevant to the topic of discussion. This made the lesson much more interesting and exciting for the students.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of motivational intervention on student behavior, a weekly tally of homework, classwork, 80 percent mastery on teacher made tests, verbal participation during class activities and

discipline incidents was maintained throughout the intervention. These data were aggregated by months and are presented in Table 2.

The intervention appears to have had a positive effect on all targeted behaviors. In particular, the incidence of no homework, decreased by 83 percent. Those behaviors associated with academic work, off-task and suspensions, also showed a marked decrease. Teacher/student conferences, discipline referrals, and dean/teacher/student conferences showed a decrease of 60 percent. These conferences with the students seem to have had an impact on their behavior. But the one conference incident that decreased the most was parent conferences which decreased by 75 percent.

The most dramatic increase that had an effect on academic achievement was seatwork. In the beginning of this study, 65 percent of the students completed their seatwork, by December 75 percent of the students completed their seatwork and at the end of the study in March, 90 percent of the students completed their seatwork assignments. There was also a great impact on teacher made tests with 80 percent mastery. At the beginning only 60 percent of the students achieved 80 percent on tests. By the end of the study, 85 percent of the students were achieving 80 percent mastery on teacher made tests. Reward/incentives that were given

to the students who achieved 80 percent mastery on teacher made tests and completed their assignments motivated other students to try harder to achieve success. These two behaviors had a significant effect on verbal participation. The achievements they had made gave them confidence in themselves to actively have an open discussion about the topics that were being discussed. Verbal participation in class activities was limited prior to the intervention. In September it was only 60 percent. After using incentives/ rewards for being prepared for discussion or for giving their opinions or making a statement relevant to the topic, verbal participation made a dramatic increase to 80 percent at the end of the study.

In summary, there were decreases in all negative behaviors and consequences, while there were increases in all positive classroom behaviors measured. The intervention was very successful.

Table 2
Results

	September / October		December		March	
	Incidents	Students	Incidents	Students	Incidents	Students
No Homework	12	6	6	6	2	2
Off Task	6	3	4	2	2	1
Teacher Student Conference	8	8	6	4	3	2
Parent Conferences	8	6	4	4	2	1
Discipline Referrals	5	3	3	3	2	1
Dean / Teacher / Student Conference	5	3	3	3	2	2
Suspension	3	3	2	2	1	1
Seatwork		13		15		18
80% Mastery on Teacher Test		12		13		17
Verbal Participation		12		14		16

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on behaviors, the students showed a marked improvement in their classwork. The rewards/incentives had an impact on their motivation to succeed. Instructing the students on how to set and achieve goals decreased the amount of teacher-time devoted to student/teacher conferences, and dean/teacher/student conferences for unsatisfactory behavior during the instructional day. The positive notes sent home to parents about their child's behavior decreased parent conferences significantly. Some students showed no sign of motivation during the first six weeks of the study, but after individual conferences with those students to reiterate what was expected from them and what reward/incentives they might receive, there was a great interest and concern about classwork, homework, 80 percent mastery on teacher made tests and an increase in verbal participation. This researcher believes attention should be focused on goal setting in earlier grades so that the students can develop a mind set on how to achieve realistic goals. This would increase their motivation to come prepared with homework, complete class assignments and willingness to verbally participate in class discussions. The students would

gain the confidence and determination to achieve the goals they set for themselves.

This researcher recommends that rewards/incentives should be given to students for work that is well done and for satisfactory behavior, with the understanding that motivation must be a self-driven process rather than a process of looking for material rewards from others. This researcher also recommends that other educators lessen the number of behaviors studied in doing their research, more time could be spent on the five behaviors that they feel are important to their classroom setting. Concentrating on five behaviors instead of ten will allow the researcher more time to spend with individual students that display unsatisfactory behaviors. The researcher also believes that once a student realizes the importance of setting and accomplishing goals they will become self-motivated.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Informed Consent Letter

Dear Parent(s),

I'm Ms. J. Sanders, your child's seventh grade teacher. I am in the process of conducting a survey.

The survey is entitled, "Improving Classroom Behavior Through a Motivational Intervention." Hopefully this survey will provide information and answers to many of our concerns as educators.

I'm seeking your permission in order to proceed with the procedures mentioned above. I feel this will be very beneficial.

If you will place a check in the box and please sign this letter and return it to me, I will proceed with my research.

_____ my child may participate
_____ my child may not participate

Please keep in mind that if your child chooses not to participate, it will not affect his/her grade or classroom treatment. Also your child may choose to quit at anytime in the project.

All data from the survey will remain anonymous.

Signature of Parent of Guardian: _____
Date of Signature: _____

Yours sincerely,

Ms. J. Sanders
7th Grade Teacher

Appendix B
Student Survey

Students Survey:

1. What motivates you to come to school?

2. Why is school important to you?

3. What motivational techniques can a teacher use to inspire you to come to school?

Circle the answer that best applies

4. How much influence do your peers have on your decision to come to school?

   Very little, little, not much, great amount

5. How much influence do your peers have on your behavior in school?

   Very little, little, not much, great amount

Appendix C
Behavioral Checklist
Discipline Referral

Subject

	No Homework						Seatwork						80% Mastery on Test						Participating Verbally in Class Activities					
Student Name	M	T	W	T	F		M	T	W	T	F		M	T	W	T	F		M	T	W	T	F	

Subject

		Off Task			Teacher/ Student Confer.			Parent Confer.			Discipline Referral	Dean/Tchr /Stud/ Confr	Suspension
Student Name	M T W T F			M T W T F			M T W T F			M T W T F			

Discipline Slip

Date _____

Dear Parent of _____

In compliance with the uniform discipline code. The following procedure has been adopted by the school.

We are sorry to report that your child has become a disturbing influence either to himself or others in the classroom by /

_____ Lacking required materials.
_____ Missing classroom or homework.
_____ Unnecessary talking during a lesson or period of study.
_____ Leaving assigned seat and walking around the room
_____ Ignoring the teacher direction or request.
_____ Discourtesy to the teachers or others.
_____ Fighting on school premises.
_____ Misconduct on the playground.
_____ Failure to return note or communications from the school.
_____ Excessive tardiness or absences.
_____ Leaving the classroom without permission.
_____ Running and / or making excessive noise in the hall or building.
_____ Detention / Dates _____
_____ Others

We ask you to help us impress your child with the necessity of good behavior in a classroom in order that the educational needs of all the children as well as your child may be filled. Misconduct can not be tolerated.

_____1. Please write a reply at the bottom of the sheet and return it to the teacher.
_____2. I would like a conference with you at 8:30 a.m. on _____ in room _____.
_____3. Your child may not return to class without a parent/ teacher/principal conference your child will be suspended.

Sincerely,

_____ _____
Dean of Students Teacher

Parent's Reply

Dear _____,

_____

_____

_____
Parent Signature